

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NEAE-00 INRE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00

USIE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 OMB-01

TRSE-00 A-01 OPR-02 SY-05 OC-06 CCO-00 AID-05

USSS-00 /070 W

-----241338Z 076304 /42

O P 241254Z MAR 77

FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 515

INFO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY

AMCONSUL KARACHI PRIORITY

AMCONSUL LAHORE PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY DACCA PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L ISLAMABAD 2828

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PK

SUBJ: POLITICAL SITUATION REMAINS TENSE

1. BOTH THE PPP AND PNA SEEM TO EXPECT NEXT STEP IN
CONFRONTATION TO OCCUR SATURDAY WHEN PNA HAS CALLED FOR HARTAL
AND COMPLETE TRANSPORTATION STOPPAGE TO PREVENT MNAS-ELECT FROM
ARRIVING IN ISLAMABAD FOR OPENING OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SESSION.
IN THE MEANTIME, THE POLITICAL SITUATION REMAINS RELATIVELY
CALM BUT TENSE.

2. THE CURFEW REMAINS IN EFFECT IN KARACHI IN THE SAME AREAS AS
BEFORE. ON MARCH 23, PNA TOOK OUT A MODEST PROCESSION AND ALSO
HELD A PUBLIC MEETING. CROWDS WERE NOT LARGE, THEY WERE
CAREFULLY MONITORED BY SECURITY FORCES AND THERE APPEARS TO
HAVE BEEN NO SIGNIFICANT VIOLENCE. CONGEN KARACHI REPORTS THAT
THE ATMOSPHERE IN THE CITY IS ONE OF LULL BEFORE SATURDAY'S
HARTAL. MOST OBSERVERS IN THE CITY EXPECT THE HARTAL TO BE
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SUCCESSFUL AND PESSIMISTICALLY ANTICIPATE DISTURBANCES IN
KARACHI AND OTHER SIND CITIES.

3. DISTURBANCES CONTINUED IN LAHORE. ON MARCH 23 PNA LEADERS
MUFTI MAHMUD, MALIK QASIM AND SHAH AHMED NOORANI TOOK OUT A
LATE AFTERNOON PROCESSION IN THE OLD CITY AND WERE ARRESTED AND
RELEASED SHORTLY AFTERWARD. CROWD ESTIMATED AT TWO TO THREE

HUNDRED WENT TO MALL, THREW STONES AT POLQVCE AND SET FIRE TO BUILDING MATERIALS AT NEW CENTRAL TELEGRAPHIC OFFICE. POLICE AND FSF USED LATHI CHARGES AND TEAR GAS TO BREAK CROWD UP.

4. CONGEN LAHORE REPORTS THAT INSPECTOR GENERAL POLICE PUNJAB HAS BEEN RELIEVED OF DUTY AND REPLACED BY A HARDLINER WITH A TOUGH REPUTATION. LAHORE ALSO NOTES THAT THE PNA CENTRAL COUNCIL HAS NOT YET PUBLICLY ANNOUNCED ITS REPLY TO THE PM'S LATEST LETTER, AND THAT ASGHAR KHAN, BY HIS OWN CHOICE, REMAINS IN JAIL. BOTH CONGEN LAHORE
ND WE HAVE RECEIVED REPORTS THAT
PNA HAS WRITTEN TWO LETTERS, ONE TO PM SPURNING TALKS AND ANOTHER TO PRESIDENT CHAUDHRY REQUESTING HE FORCE BHUTTO TO RESIGN.

5. ATMOSPHERE IN LAHORE IS ONE OF DOUBT AND CONFUSION ABOUT POLITICAL FUTURE. CONGEN REPORTS THAT OPPOSITION SHOWS INCREASING DETERMINATION TO TOUGH IT OUT AND CITY IS NERVOUS AND UNCERTAIN IN ANTICIPATION OF SATURDAY.
BYROADE

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